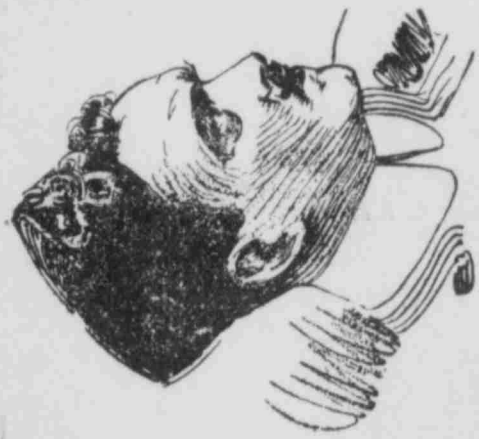


THE MERRY WIDOW



The Merry Widow

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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CHAPTER II. Old Love and New.

"WELL, here I am," announced a tall, slender youth, entering the deserted salon a few minutes later with Nish at his side. "I'm here at my country's call, all right, but my confounded country doesn't seem to be on hand to meet me."

His graceful walk was not wholly steady, and there was a flush on the handsome young face. The late arrival was Prince Danilo of Marsovia, attache of the Marsovian legation at Paris. As a diplomat he had scarcely scored a success, for he had a delightfully normal aversion to work and a simple, unfailing joy in the amusements of Maxim's and his clubs.

"I'll hunt up his excellency at once,"



THE LATE ARRIVAL WAS PRINCE DANILLO.

Nish was assuring the prince. "You are quite in condition to see him, if I may."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Danilo, "only the Baptism of Nish. If I could only get a few hours of sleep."

"Perhaps I could find you some place to—"

"I'd prefer a desk, if you can find one. I always sleep best at my desk. But I suppose—"

"There is a couch, sir, over in the corner behind the palms. How would that do? You could get a nice nap there, and in a little while I'd find his excellency for you. But, sir, if I may say so, why do you waste your life in dissipation when you might marry and settle down? Just think, now! Would not a dear little wife and a home of your own be better worth while than all your clubs? I leave it to you!"

"You leave it to me?" retorted Danilo. "Then I make it clubs."

"But, if I may say so—"

"You may not," interrupted Danilo, crossing to the couch and throwing himself at full length among its cushions. "By by! If you're waking, call me early!"

He spread a handkerchief over his face and in a moment was sound asleep, leaving Nish to tiptoe out in search of Popoff.

For a few minutes no sound was audible in the empty salon save the distant swell and fall of dance music, punctuated by the slumberous prince's heavy breathing.

Then Natalia hurried in with De Jolidon. Both looked anxious.

"How careless of me!" the ambassador's wife was exclaiming. "Where can I have dropped the miserable fan? If my husband should pick it up and find on it those words you were foolish enough to write—I wonder if I left it in the niche on the stairs when we were sitting there. Let's go back and see."

They turned back, almost colliding with Sonia, who was entering, Cascada directly behind her.

"Oh, Mme. Sadowa," asked Natalia, "you haven't seen anything of a white ivory fan? I've looked everywhere, and—"

"No," replied the widow; "but I'll look in this room if you haven't made a thorough search here already."

Natalia, thanking her, hurried back with her cavalier to the stairway. Sonia idly began her search, but Cascada interrupted her.

"That can wait," he pleaded, "but I cannot. Won't you hear me?"

"Certainly," assented Sonia cheerfully. "You are going to propose, aren't you?"

"Ah, you read my secret!"

"It required little cleverness. You men are all alike."

"But no man ever before loved as I love!" protested Cascada, his voice unconsciously rising in his emotion. "You are all the world to me. Until I met you I never thought I could—"

"Ring off!" grumbled Danilo in his sleep, vaguely bothered by the loud voice.

Sonia started.

"Some one is here!" she whispered, pointing toward the hidden couch.

"You are mistaken," contradicted Cascada, "and even if it were so I am willing for all the world to know how I—"



A long, blissful, sonorous snore from the couch.

Sonia laughed, her eyes alight with amusement.

"Snoring and romance don't go well together, marquises," she observed, "and as the snoring doesn't seem likely to stop the romance must. You say you are in love with me, and I know you are in love with my fortune. Good-by."

"You misjudge me cruelly!" Cascada protested.

"Oh, no, I don't! Men are all alike. Good-by."

As the discomfited marquise made his way wrathfully from the room Sonia mischievously crept across to the couch. There lay the man, sound asleep, his face still covered by the handkerchief. Sonia touched his hair.

"Scat!" roared Danilo, giving his head a shake that let the handkerchief fall from his face.

"Danilo!" gasped the widow, starting back.

At sound of his name the prince sat up, dazed and blinking. His wandering eyes fell on the woman, and, with an exclamation of utter amazement, he stumbled to his feet and stood staring incredulously at her.

"Sonia!" he exclaimed. "Sonia!"

Then, recovering himself, he bowed stiffly and said:

"I beg your pardon, madame."

"No; I beg yours," she replied. "Pray go on snoring."

"You don't remember me?" he asked, surprised.

"Not in the very least," she answered, moving away.

"Yet you called my name."

"You were asleep then. That was different."

"And now I am awake—to the joy of seeing you again."

"The joy is all your own. Is it so surprising to find me in Paris? I am here enjoying my wealth—and freedom!"

"I congratulate you on both, especially the freedom."

"Yes, freedom is one of your fads, I believe," remarked Sonia, "especially freedom from marriage. Do you still make a habit of avoiding marriage—at the last moment?"

"Sonia, you are unjust. If it had rested with me you should be my wife now, not at other man's widow."

"If it rested with you?" she mimicked. "Well, let the whole story rest now. It's forgotten."

"By you, perhaps—never by me."

"Oh, no! I remember it every now and then for my own amusement. But it is hard to think of myself as the little Marsovian peasant maid to whom the dashing cavalry officer, Prince Danilo, was once engaged and whom his rich old uncle at the last moment forbade to marry because of her poverty. How differently that same rich old uncle would look on the match to-day! Twenty millions is a pretty dowry."

"At least it seems you didn't break your heart over losing me," sneered Danilo.

"No; my piebald heart stood the shock excellently. I soon found consolation—an elderly husband who lived just one week after the wedding and left me all his wealth."

"Yes; I heard how your father forced you into the match. Next time you can choose a husband to suit yourself."

"Why should I marry again? I am rich, free. I have everything."

"Including love?" he asked, his eyes devouring her fragile beauty.

"I don't believe in love," scoffed Sonia. "All men are alike. Dozens of them are after my money and make love to me because they can't get it without me."

"Men are not all fortune hunters," he denied hotly. "I for one!"

"So they all say. Each says 'I love you!' Each means my fortune."

"They do?" cried Danilo, in rage at the strong insinuation. "Well, here's one that doesn't. I for one shall never say to you, 'I love you!'"

A strange smile stole across her face. She came very close to where he stood; so close that the faint perfume of her hair was sweet in his nostrils; so close that her breath was warm upon his lips; so close that his bewildered soul struggled in vain to hide from the glory in her eyes. Her voice was a musical whisper as she asked:

"You'll never say to me 'I love you?'"

There was an infinity of allurements in the tempting words. Danilo, with a mighty effort, shook off the spell and shouted:

"Never! Never! Never!"

"That's a comfort!" she said coldly, drawing away and seeking to veil her



"NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!"

keen disappointment. "But," she added more softly, "why not say it if you really want to?"

"I don't want to!" he declared sulkily.

"And you promise faithfully you'll never say to me, 'I love you?'"

Again she was perilously close to him. Again his eyes tore themselves free from the pleading seductiveness of hers as he reiterated:

"I promise! I'm not going to make a fool of myself or be made a fool of."

"Is that a declaration of war?" queried Sonia.

"No—of friendship. Do you mean to say if I asked you to be my wife you would merely laugh at me?"

"Probably. All men are alike."

"They are not, and in time I'll prove it to you."

Before she could answer the ambassador and several of the guests came into the room. At first opportunity Popoff drew Danilo aside.

"Prince," said he impressively, "you have now been attached to this legation nearly four months and—"

"Few of my attachments last so long," observed Danilo.

"You refer to your love affairs? I have heard of them. They have brought you to the brink of ruin. You are almost penniless. Here is my plan

to save you, also to give you a chance to save your country from bankruptcy. I want you to marry."

"To what?" cried Danilo.

"To marry—beautiful woman, my boy—twenty millions—Mme. Sonia Sadowa! Hey?"

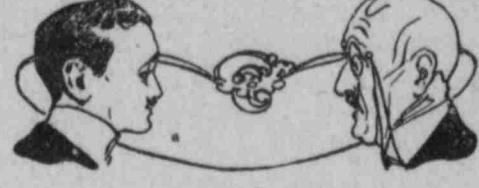
"Never!" returned Danilo, angrily, as he rose to end the interview.

"Then a Frenchman will marry her and her fortune and our country will be ruined."

"I won't marry her," repeated Danilo, "and she won't marry me. But for my country's sake I'll keep any Frenchman from marrying her."

"But how?"

"You shall see!"



CHAPTER III. The Garden Fete.

THE gardens of Mme. Sonia Sadowa's villa, just outside Paris, were gayly decorated for a lawn fete. The grounds were dotted with laughing groups of brightly dressed men and women, for Sonia had particularly requested that all her Marsovian guests wear their picturesque native costume, and the result was a veritable kaleidoscopic carnival of color, a perfect riot of gorgeous hues and striking figures.

Ambassador Popoff, his long, lean figure draped in vivid green, was pacing the alleys of the garden near the entrance gate, pausing nervously now and again to scan late arrivals in search of some one. At length he desisted the man he sought. Nish was just bustling into the grounds, and the ambassador at once beckoned to him.

"Now, then, Mr. Nish," cried Popoff as soon as the little clerk had shuffled within earshot, "I told you to



bring Prince Danilo here and not to leave him for an instant until—"

"He wouldn't let me stay," explained Nish. "He says he won't come. He's giving a party—if I may say so, a very gay!"

"And for the sake of a lot of pleasure seeking idlers the prince refuses to obey my orders and come to Mme. Sonia's?"

"Yes, your excellency. He positively refuses to come. And when I say 'positively' refuses I— Here he is now!"

Danilo, resplendent in the uniform of a Marsovian captain of hussars, strolled nonchalantly forward, with a careless nod that quite ignored the ambassador's glare of reproach at his lateness.

"I understand, prince," began Popoff coldly. "that you positively refused to obey my—"

"So I did, so I did," assented Danilo cheerfully. "But at the last moment I changed my mind and my clothes, and here I am. I've postponed my party for an hour or so. You see, I remembered my promise to help you scare away from the widow any Frenchman who seemed inclined to make love to her. That's why I came."

"Good!" approved Popoff, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Very good! And where do you expect to begin?"

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"Before my confinement," writes Mrs. Rose Schubart, of Monument, Colo., "I had such bearing-down pains I didn't know what to do. Cardui quickly relieved me. Some months later I had a fine 12-lb. baby, was sick only thirty minutes, and did not even have a doctor."

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MEN'S COSTUMES.

The Change That Came When Powder and Snuff Went Out.

The French revolution had its effect upon the fashions of 1800 as well as upon matters of more weighty import, the tendency being greatly to simplify costumes. Young men in England adopted the short coat, light waistcoat and pantaloons inaugurated in Paris by a certain set who affected to despise the old court fashion.

The use of powder, made more expensive by taxation, quite died out, and short hair became universal.

Trousers and Wellington boots, at first worn only by the military, were adopted by civilians about 1814, and the dandy of the early Victorian era wore his tightly strapped down. He also prided himself on his starched collar, which had gone out of favor under George IV., who preferred a black silk kerchief or stock.

The snuffbox vanished, and the characteristic ornament of the age was the bunch of seals hanging from the watch chain. Various modifications took place from time to time during Queen Victoria's long reign, but the form of men's dress practically remained unaltered.

The knickerbockers and tweed suit of the country gentleman are of comparatively modern date, as well as the wide awake, the soft felt hat.—English Illustrated Magazine.

Heat prostrates the nerves. In the summer one needs a tonic to off-set the customary hot weather Nerve and Strength depression. You will feel better within 48 hours after beginning to take such a remedy as Dr. Shoop's Restorative. Its prompt action in restoring the weakened nerves is surprising. Of course, you won't get entirely strong in a few days, but each day you can actually feel the improvement. That tired, listless, spiritless, feeling will quickly depart when using the Restorative. Dr. Shoop's Restorative will sharpen a failing appetite; it aids digestion; it will strengthen the weakened Kidneys and Heart by simple rebuilding the worn-out nerves that these organs depend upon. Test it a few days and be convinced. Sold by All Dealers.

The Human Touch.

"Janie had a doll that would say 'Papa' and 'Mamma'."

"What became of it?"

"Jane's mother is an advanced person, and she said the doll was an inexcusably childish reminder of a grossly benighted period."

"And what did she do?"

"She threw it in a dark closet where Janie didn't dare to go. And then a day or two later she happened to step on it in the dark and it shrieked 'Mamma!' so naturally that she fell over in a faint and bumped her head and had two buckets of water poured over her before she recovered consciousness."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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